LAKE BARCROFT DILEMMA 8/21/6

Migratory Geese Settle Down, Unsettle Suburbia

By THOMAS LOVE
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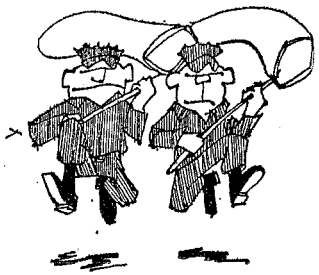
Suburban living has its problems, but Paul Barron is faced with one more natural to rural Canada than to the urbanized Lake Barcroft community of Fairfax County.

His lake-front dwelling is overrun with wild geese.

Early every morning, he says, a flotilla of some 45 Canadian honkers, led by two unrelated white geese, makes a beachhead landing in the small cove in front of his home.

And later each day, Barron says it takes about three hours to clean up the mess left by the invasion.

"I have called the Washington Zoo, the Audubon Society, the game warden, the Montgomery County Courthouse, the Fairfax County Coourthouse, pet control and pest control stores and the Fairfax County Health Department," Mrs. Barron says.



"Sympathy was offered, but no constructive aid."

Fairfax County's response was "desultory and dreary, almost apathetic," Barron recalls. "The Health Department referred us to the Commonwealth's attorney to bring suit. Sue? You can't sue the geese. Maybe we should sue the county to abate a nuisance, but we can't find out if there is any law under which we can take action."

The Fish and Wildlife Service of the Interior Department has accepted jurisdiction over the geese as migratory wildfowl, with little result.

Last month an Interior Department expert arrived at the lake with a government power boat and two "borrowed" Marines to man it, Mrs. Barron said.

The expert thought the geese would be molting and unable to fly, so the plan was to catch them with nets, Mrs. Barron continued. While searching for the flock, the expedition was stopped short by the Lake Barcroft police. The rules prohibit anyone but the police from using gasoline motor powered boats on the lake.

The federal boat was ignominously towed by a police boat back to shore to await special permission. This was granted, and the party started out again. When the geese were located at the far end of the lake, it was

discovered that they were not molting, and only a single goose was netted.

The birds seem to have become wise to the ways of man, and can't be scared off. Unless a threatening gesture is made, they will allow people to walk among them.

"Even throwing firecrackers at them while they are on the beach hasn't worked," Mrs. Barron said. "They just shove off and wait in the middle of the lake for you to leave."

Besides messing up his sandy beach and munching on the tender shoots of his lawn, Barron believes the birds are a health hazard. "They increase the bacteria count wherever they are," he says.

A conversation with Barron reveals that the Lake Barcroft community may be splitting into two campsAthe pro-goose faction and the anti-goose faction.

"Some people like them and feed them," he said, "but not those who have a place where they come."

When he first moved into his house at 6323 Cavlier Corridor two years ago, there were no geese on the lake, Barron said. "Last year there were 10 or 12, and now there are about 45."

He is concerned about what this mathematical progression may lead to next year.